

A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

On November 4, Barack Obama was elected president of the United States in an electoral process that was also followed closely in India and around the world. The victory by the former U.S. Senator from Illinois follows a campaign that stretched to nearly two years.

The president-elect has immediately begun the process of preparing his administration through a long political transition. President-elect Obama and President George W. Bush have already met, and their aides are working together to ensure that the president-elect and his new Cabinet are fully informed and ready to begin working at noon on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2009.

Until then, President Bush and his Cabinet will continue to lead the U.S. government. Obama has talked briefly with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and other world leaders, but because the United States has no tradition of a “shadow Cabinet,” he is spending much of his time choosing his management team and outlining his priorities with his advisers.

All American presidents make history; Obama is the first African American to win the office. With so much of America’s history tied up in attempts to fully realize the aspirations of the nation’s Founding Fathers, the

election of Obama has brought about a major change in Americans’ race relations.

In his graceful concession speech on November 4, Obama’s electoral opponent, Arizona Senator John McCain, pointed to this historic change. Senator McCain will return to his Senate seat in January.

“Change” was the principle slogan of Obama’s campaign. Yet in his victory speech he also dwelt on the enduring strengths of America that make such progress possible. “Tonight we proved once more that

President George W. Bush and President-elect Barack Obama in the Oval Office of the White House.

the true strength of our nation comes...from the enduring power of our ideals—democracy, liberty, opportunity and unyielding hope,” Obama said.

In this issue of SPAN we have reprinted the speech in its entirety, as a keepsake and research resource, along with other details about the transition and election. We also include in this issue a pictorial history of the last 12 presidents.

Other special features include an article by Jane Varner Malhotra on how Americans who are vegetarians celebrate Thanksgiving, sometimes known as Turkey Day. We’ve inserted some of their recipes, too.

By this time each year, much of the United States has experienced the autumnal season of changing leaves. Erica Lee Nelson and Sebastian John share their experiences, in text and photos, of the natural beauty and warm hospitality that awaits those who travel into America’s wooded regions in the fall.

We would like to hear your opinions about the articles in this issue. Please write to us at editorspan@state.gov

